

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 17121

FOLLOWING TEL CALCUTTA 3024 DTD 22 DEC 75 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 3024

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: WEST BENGAL YOUTH CONGRESS RALLY: SANJAY GANDHI PRAISED,
THE CPI CONDEMNED

1. THE NEW LEADERSHIP OF THE WEST BENGAL YOUTH CONGRESS HELD A RALLY ON THE CALCUTTA MAIDAN DECEMBER 20. FROM EYEWITNESS REPORTS AND THE PICTURES IN THE PRESS IT APPEARS THAT THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL TURNOUT. THE WHO'S WHO OF THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS PARTY WAS THERE ON THE DIAS AND ACCORDING TO THE PRESS THE SPEAKERS TOOK TURNS LAUDING THE PRIME MINISTER AND SANJAY GANDHI. FROM THE PRESS ACCOUNTS IT IS APPARENT THAT SOME WERE MORE EFFUSIVE IN THEIR PRAISE OF SANJAY THAN OTHERS, BUT IT IS THE ATTENTION GIVEN SANJAY THAT IS THE MOST REMARKABLE THING ABOUT THIS RALLY. PRO-CONGRESS AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA BEGINS ITS FRONT-PAGE ACCOUNT OF THE RALLY THUS: "THE EMERGENCE OF MR. SANJAY GANDHI IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SCENE, AND PARTICULARLY HIS UNDAUNTED EFFORTS ALONG WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, MRS. INDIRA GANDHI, TO BRING ABOUT UNITY IN THE YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERSHIP IN WEST BENGAL, WAS HAILED BY YOUTH, STUDENT AND CONGRESS LEADERS AT A HUGE GATHERING AT SHAHID MINAR MAIDAN ON SATURDAY."

2. CHIEF MINISTER S.S. RAY WAS THERE AND IN HIS REMARKS REPORT-
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EDLY EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE NEW YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERSHIP BUT

SAID CONGRESS HAS NOT TAKEN ANY NEW TURN AND "CONTINUES TO PURSUE THE IDEALS OF SOCIALISM, DEMOCRACY AND SECULARISM." PRESS ACCOUNTS SAY THAT RAY REPEATEDLY SHOUTED "INDIRA GANDHI ZINDABAD" TO THE CROWD. (COMMENT: RATHER THAN PUTTING TO REST REPORTS OF HIS IMPENDING OUSTER, RAY'S SHOW OF DEVOTION APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN NEW IMPETUS TO THEM.) THE PAPERS ALL NOTE THAT CONGRESS M.P. ASHOKE SEN, A BITTER ENEMY OF RAY'S AND RUMORED TO BE A PRIME CANDIDATE TO REPLACE HIM, SHARED THE DIAS WITH HIM. PAPERS ALSO UNDERSCORE THE PRESENCE OF GOWB MINISTER FOR INFORMATION SUBRATA MUKERJEE, A POWERFUL FIGURE IN THE YOUTH CONGRESS WHO WAS REPORTEDLY WAVERING BETWEEN SUPPORT OF THE NEW YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERSHIP AND THE OUSTED GROUP UNDER P.R. DAS MUNSHI. INTERPRETATION PLACED ON MUKERJEE'S PRESENCE AT THE RALLY IS THAT HE HAS THROWN IN HIS LOT WITH THE NEW LEADERSHIP.

3. ANOTHER REMARKABLE ASPECT OF THE RALLY WAS CRITICISM OF THE CPI IN AN ADDRESS BY WEST BENGAL CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY NURUL ISLAM. ACCORDING TO AMRITA, ISLAM "MADE A BLISTERING ATTACK ON THE CPI." ISLAM REPORTEDLY CHARGED CPI WITH HAVING "DRIVEN A WEDGE INTO THE UNITY OF THE YOUTH CONGRESS" AND ACCUSED THE FORMER YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERSHIP OF "TOEING THE CPI LINE." AMRITA REPORTS THAT ISLAM WARNED THAT IF THE CPI NOW MADE ANY ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT CONGRESS UNITY IT WOULD "BE THROWN IN THE DUSTBIN." ISLAM HAD WHAT AMRITA DESCRIBES AS "FULL THROATED PRAISE" FOR SANJAY GANDHI AND SAID THAT THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LEGITIMATE PLACE IN THE YOUTH CONGRESS ARE NOW PROPERLY REPRESENTED.

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